

THE BABBLER



News from Gluepot Reserve Summer 2026

The Sandy Dam Project

We are in the initial stages of a multiyear restoration of the Sandy Dam area. This has been made possible by a grant received from the Native Vegetation Council and in collaboration with the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board, the Australian Landscape Trust and Trees for Life .

Sandy Dam is a typical pastoral dam and pasture site that was once diverse Black Oak (*Casuarina pauper*) and Mallee woodland and is now a degraded woody weed shrubland with erosion scarring and the dam still intact.

Sandy Dam was not decommissioned like the other 16 pastoral dams on Gluepot because it had historically been used as a dump by the landholders and was full of rubbish. Last year, thanks to the generosity of Sims Metal, 65 tons of scrap metal and other materials were removed from the Dam. We are now ready to embark on the restoration.

Firstly, heavy machinery will be used to fill the dam basin and its inlets. It will be possible to fill the bottom of the dam with poorer subsoil that is now on the top of the dam walls and return the richer subsoils, currently on the bottom of the dam walls, to the top of the dam area.

To then aid the regeneration of Black Oak, a multi-tine soil ripper will be used to damage the tree roots. As Black Oak propagate by suckering, they will then resprout from the damaged roots. This method of root ripping can be effective up to 50m from the stands of mature Black Oak which are found to the east, west and south of Sandy Dam.

Volunteers will be able to then help with the “branching” process. This involves collecting plant material - woody weeds, fallen tree branches, troublesome branches overhanging tracks are ideal - and layering these on the bare soil. This covering will help prevent erosion, trap seeds, provide a microhabitat for plant regeneration and will work as a natural silt trap.

Planting will also be required as mallee eucalypts do not respond to root ripping and tend not to regenerate in “branched” areas. Some seeds for this purpose have already been collected at the recent seed workshop held by Trees for Life.

They have been planted and are being cared for at the Trees for Life Nursery (pictured on Right).



The seedlings Photo by Bruce Smith

The area will also need to be weeded and an irrigation system laid out. Once the seedlings are ready, volunteers can help with the planting as well as preparation and positioning of guards made out of mesh fencing wire.

Gluepot Reserve is a core member of the Living Landscape Alliance (LLA). Members of the LLA are owner-managers of South Australian and New South Welsh conservation properties. The LLA covers a vast contiguous block of mallee woodland across the South Olary Plains. Trees for Life and Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board are also members.

This Alliance brings together a wealth of knowledge, experience and skills in the field of ecological restoration.

Gluepot is benefitting from their expertise as we start to restore Sandy Dam. Experience has shown that these projects take 5 to 10 years depending on the erratic annual rainfall.

Obituary: Elisa Bell



Elisa Bell

It is with great sadness that I write this article for the Babler on Elisa Bell following her passing on the 5th January 2026. Elisa and her partner Gunter became Rangers at Gluepot in 2011 and remained regular Rangers until 2017 only missing one year in 2015.

Elisa was dedicated and passionate about the environment and in particular very happy to be involved in Birdlife Australia Gluepot Reserve and was very committed to contributing to the success of the reserve in conserving and protecting its wildlife. Elisa wanted to make a difference and preserve the environment and this was very evident when talking to Elisa. Elisa was a very cheerful and affable person and easy to strike up a conversations about the environment and nature. Elisa would always meet and greet visitors to the reserve and would enthusiastically pass onto visitors the best camp grounds to stay, the best places to see birds and other information to make their stay as enjoyable as possible. Elisa was an exceptional advocate for Gluepot Reserve and the conservation values and benefits of the reserve in the broader landscape.

Another example of Elisa’s commitment to and understanding of the mallee environment was in 2017 when she observed an outbreak of the Looper caterpillar which was defoliating vast areas of the mallee vegetation. Nearly 10 years ago now, Elisa and Chris Lill observed the habits of the looper caterpillar and applying their intimate knowledge of the ecology of the mallee, speculated as to the cause and factors that allow this insect to become so invasive and destructive.

Gunter was a carpenter by trade and undertook many small repair project on Gluepot to improve the facilities. One only has to look closely at some of the tasks Gunter and Elisa completed at Gluepot to realize they both have a strong work ethic. Elisa was always present to assist Gunter and lend a hand to these projects. Together they were a great team. One such improvement was to put timber backs on all the cupboards used for storing important vegetation reference books so that cockroaches and other insects did not infest and damage the books. In addition both Gunter and Elisa were very proactive in ensuring the Cadell Prisoner Team and the Green Army projects (fencing and track clearing work, gazebo) were undertaken safely and satisfactorily.

Elisa was highly respected and will be remembered as being a quiet achiever and for her dedication, commitment and outstanding contributions to Gluepot and nature conservation. Its people like Elisa that have contributed to Gluepot’s enviable reputation as an example of a successful community managed reserve.

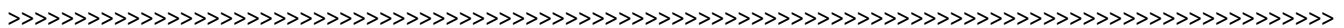
Elisa and Gunter are some of the most beloved members of the ‘Gluepot Family’ and we will mis Elisa deeply.

We have indeed lost one of nature’s true advocates.

Ian Falkenberg
 Chairperson
 Gluepot Management Committee



Gunter May



A Corvid (on Left) and Willie Wagtail (on Right) harassing Brown Goshawks.



Gluepot in Pictures



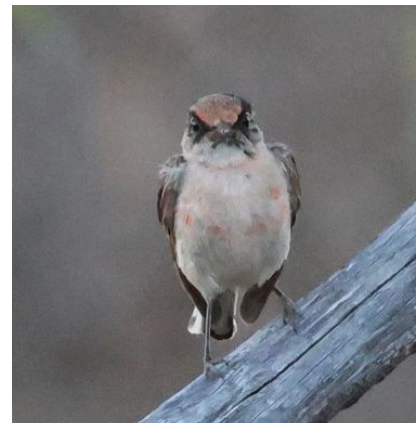
47deg.C The water is a lifesaver.



A Southern Scrub-robin Photo Petra Hanke



Wedge-tailed Eagle. An unusual visitor.



A Red-capped Robin Photo Petra Hanke



A Brown Goshawk thinking about its next meal?



It really does rain at Gluepot.....sometimes

Photo Betty Brezovskis

The images above Left and on the previous page, are all taken from the stealth cameras that are installed on all the bird hides. The cards in the cameras are exchanged and reviewed by Rod Bradtke. The photographs on the Right have been sent in by our volunteers. Please consider sending in a photo or two.

